

New legislation proposes public water systems asset management requirements

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In early February 2017, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) introduced legislation that would require all public water systems to implement an “asset management” program by October 1, 2018. This asset management program would require public entities to demonstrate that the operation of the water system meets thresholds of technical, managerial and financial capability. Written asset management programs would need to be available onsite for inspection at all times.

According to the OEPA, the primary goal of these asset management programs would be to help improve water systems that are “obviously struggling” and assist such water systems in acquiring State Revolving Fund loans. While the specific requirements for a water system’s asset management program have not yet been finalized, the OEPA has stated that such programs would likely include:

- an inventory and evaluation of all of a water system’s assets
- guidelines on the operation and maintenance of the water system
- an emergency preparedness and contingency plan
- the creation of criteria and timelines for infrastructure rehabilitation and replacement
- approved capacity projections and capital improvement planning
- a long-term funding strategy to support asset management program implementation

Under the terms of the proposed legislation, the OEPA director would have the authority to ensure that public water systems meet these capability requirements; water systems that fail to meet the required standards could face OEPA action. However, the legislation also requires the OEPA to provide several services to public water systems to aid in the implementation of asset management programs.

The proposed bill, Senate Bill 2, currently awaits review by the Ohio Senate. The OEPA has characterized the proposed legislation as “a priority to ensure safe and reliable drinking water for Ohio citizens,” and the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee has set an expedited hearing schedule for the bill. More information on the new requirements will likely become available soon.

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